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**MY MOTHER**  
**Her Family and Ancestry**

AN ACCOUNT OF THE  
LIFE, FAMILY AND ANCESTRY  
OF  
**Phoebe Maria (Blake) Sawyer**  
OF  
KENSINGTON, N. H.

With a Brief Genealogy of her branch  
of the Blake Family of Kensington,  
Hampton and England

By  
REV. ROLAND D. SAWYER  
of Kensington, New Hampshire  
and Ware, Massachusetts

1935

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REV. ROLAND D. SAWYER  
of Kensington, N. H., and Ware, Mass.

Born into life — man grows  
Forth from his parent's stem,  
And blends their blood, as those  
Of their's, was blent in them —

So each man strikes his root  
in a far fore-time. (MATTHEW ARNOLD)

Rec'd Sept 7-1978







## MOTHER

Phoebe Maria (Blake) Sawyer

June 17, 1847 — Sept. 8, 1921

O that those lips had language; years have passed  
So long and lonely, since I heard them last.  
O that those lips might smile; that I might see  
The smile, that in my childhood solaced me.

I can not tell with my poor gift of speech or song,  
My love for thee my mother, dead and lost so long



## Phœbe Maria (Blake) Sawyer

(MY MOTHER)

"She reigned there within  
The chaste, gentle housewife  
And mother of children.  
And wisely and sweetly,  
The home ruled discreetly."

SCHILLER

PHOEBE MARIA BLAKE was born June 17, 1847, the last of the children born to Col. John T. and Mary Elizabeth (Moulton) Blake. Her childhood was spent at the "Blake City" homestead, which was then a stirring place, the old shop being the place of employment of some dozen or so of men, and the store the gathering spot for various men from the town to get their mail and trade. During these days the store was one of the 22 places in town where rum was sold. Then came on the thrilling days of the Civil War, men gathered there to discuss enlisting, and to wish one another "good-bye" as one by one they went away. So, while the Blake home was in the country it was far from being the rural home of our modern days.

Phoebe Maria was named after her Aunt Phoebe in Bangor, but by use the first name was dropped and she was called Maria thru life. Maria attended the Brick school, and there was then hope in her soul that she might live with Uncle Newell in Bangor and go thru the academy there. But, after one winter, her Aunt Phoebe did not feel she wanted the responsibility of rearing a girl, so Maria returned home and worked stitching shoes in the home. The year of 1869 she worked in Haverhill and





saved sufficient money to attend Robinson Female Seminary the years of 1870-71, 72. In the spring of 1873 Hampton Falls had built the new schoolhouse in District No. 4, and Nathan H. Robie was casting about for a teacher, and Maria accepted the position and became the first teacher in the school. She gave the finest satisfaction, and the registers which are preserved show an exceptional neatness and ability. She always prized the associations there formed above all others in her life, and looked back on the days of her first school as perhaps "her happiest days".

The prospect of leaving study for teaching had brought marriage, Feb. 27, 1873, with Stephen C. Sawyer of Kensington, and after I was born January 8, 1874, she resigned from teaching, but the next year, 1875, Mr. Robie came to her again, and she took the school another year, she and I boarding with Charles Hardy's family. In 1876 she taught in Brentwood, and in 1877 at the Brick School in Kensington. The rest of her life was spent as a loving and faithful parent and grand-parent.

All her life mother was advocating higher education, and the greatest joy of her life was, that when in 1892 she received from Uncle Newell's estate an inheritance of \$4,000, she was able to spare enough to aid her three children to higher education and yet have enough to keep her thru to the end, for when she died, Sept. 8, 1921, there was \$150 left.

After the children were up and away mother and father lived in comfort on the little farm, on such food and fuel as the ten acres and one cow and a horse were able to bring forth with father's labor, with an eating into the little savings account of \$120 per year.

She was the eighth generation in America from one of the pioneer families of Hampton, one of the four original





towns in New Hampshire. As a mother she was kind and loving and wise. She made every sacrifice that love could demand and performed every service that wisdom could point out. She filled the picture so beautifully painted in the above verse of Schiller's SONG OF THE BELL. When she passed I lost the most splendid companion of a most beautiful comradeship, but I tried not to allow the shadows of my great sorrow to spoil my memories of that sweet comradeship. I succeeded well. A clairvoyant experience of which I speak in later pages, mother's spiritualistic faith in a future life, and my own faith in the same based largely upon a conviction that Christ's re-appearance to his disciples after death is historic, these made for my success.

Most communions of Christian faith believe that the saints communicate to us inspiring influences. Surely no saint ever loved like a mother. Thus if inspiration from the departed be at all possible, we may well believe that death does not separate us from a mother's influence, and so thru the years I have felt our comradeship continues.

## **Standing by Mother's Death-Bed**

### **LIFE'S MOST TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE**

"When the trembling, wrinkled hands, that ne'er lay in idle rest,  
Were folded white as marble o'er that cold and pulseless breast,  
How we missed the dear old Mother as her spirit fled away  
O my heart was broke with sorrow, I could not even pray."

To watch your mother die, to close the eyes, bind up the jaw, watch the stiffening frame, such an experience brings one into the fellowship of those who must suffer the most terrible experience in life. The vague despair, the dazed sorrow, perhaps a little bit of longing which comes from a religious faith not entirely prostrated, these are the moods.



How mankind has wrestled with the experience of death, what cults and customs have sprung up in caring for the dead. Some pare the nails, others cut the hair and blacken the face, all forms of offerings to the gods spring up. The most ancient men put their dead away where the animals could not find them, the most ancient posture of the dead was to fold them into much the same position they took in their mother's body before birth. Some have hidden their dead in caverns, others have covered them with earth, others have burned them. All these various customs of treating the dead are mute witness to the mystery of death. All this race-old wrestling with the dead came before me the night mother died.

Life has no joy like a mother's welcome as one comes home. Her loving greeting, the smile of her loving face, the tender admiration in her eyes, the emotional grip of her hands, then to tell her of your fortunes while she listens with such joy—to stand by mother's death-bed, look down and know all this has forever gone, this plunges a man's soul into the deepest sorrow we can know.

And the sorrow lasts. Lamartine so well said:—

“A mother is the rallying point around which affection and a thousand tender endeavors concentrate. And dreary is the blank when the point is withdrawn.”

The almost overwhelming sorrow of standing by mother's death-bed lasts and lasts. Only those who have lost their mother, can sense rightly the truth of Mrs. Hemen's words:—

“There is none in all this cold and hollow world,  
No fount of deep, strong, deathless love,  
Save that within a mother's heart.”

My mother's death-bed was 36 hours of terrible struggle between life and death. Mother turned her face to the





wall and refused to again speak at 5 in the morning: she soon sank into a stupor, and during the night, all night long, she gasped and gasped. A thousand times it seemed as though the end had come, then would follow a rattling gasp and life would come back and hang on. It was a calm summer night, but how terrible it was. Happily I had some whiskey, and an occasional drink sort of dulled my feelings. The next day it was the same all day, and at 4 P. M. I phoned for Dr. Day. He came, I told him it did not seem as though I could stand it another night, and I asked him if he could not give her something to ease her passing. He said, "Yes, I can and I will". He gave her a stiff hypodermic, and I do not think he had got to Exeter, when my wife called, "Roland, I think she has gone". I hastened in, and true enough, the soul had taken its flight.

"And Death is terrible they say —  
Methinks I like his looks today."

That long, long night I kept virgil by mother's death-bed, I can never forget a single item in its terribleness. Since then I have thought again and again of the following verses, which so well describe it:—

"It's a wild night for a soul to go,  
Stars shine and the winds blow  
And the flood tides flow.  
A wild night for a naked soul  
To cast aside the broken bowl  
And start for the distant goal.  
A wild night and a lonely way,  
And Death is terrible they say,  
Yet methinks I like his looks today.

So glad I'll lay my garments by  
And fling me forth to the windy sky  
When Death rides by.



It's a long road to the nearest star  
 Where the band of the well-beloved are,  
 But I shall reach it, near or far.

LE MESURIER

Beside Le Mesurier, Thomas Hood, James Aldrich and Henley have left us pictures of mothers on their death-beds, which are powerful with beauty and emotion.

FROM ALDRICH

We watched her breathing thru the night —  
 Her breathing soft and low,  
 As in her breast the wave of life  
 Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seemed to speak,  
 So slowly moved about,  
 As we had lent her half our powers  
 To eke her living out.

And when the morn came dim and sad  
 And chill with earthly showers,  
 Her quiet eyelids closed — she had  
 Another morn than ours.

For when the sun in all its state  
 Illumined the eastern skies,  
 She passed thru glorie's morning gate  
 And walked in Paradise.

FROM HENLEY'S "MOTHER"

In the long nights hours we watched her,  
 Dabbed in sweat the sacred head  
 Lay uncomplaining, so still, so strange,  
 Till the dear face turned dead.

The good heroic soul with all its wealth,  
 Its years of love and sacrifice,  
 Suffering and passionate faith were re-absorbed  
 Into the Inexorable Peace,  
 And life was changed for me forever more.





The stars shine as of old, the unchanging river  
 Bent on its errand of immortal law,  
 Works its appointed way  
 To the immemorable sea.  
 And the brave truth comes home,  
 That she as yet works and shines,  
 Lives and fulfills herself,  
 Unending as the river and the stars.

Dearest live on, in such immortality,  
 As I, thy son can give.  
 Living flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone,  
 Born of your body and nursed  
 At thy wild, faithful breasts.

Between the river and the stars,  
 O royal, radiant soul,  
 Thou dost return, thine influence returns,  
 Upon thy children as in life; and Death  
 Turns stingless. What is death  
 But life in act. How shall the unending years  
 Be victor over thee —  
 My mother — mother of men.

### MOTHER'S FUNERAL AND BURIAL

(Taps — Sept., 1921)

Fades the light;	Love, good night,
And afar	Must thou go
Goeth day	When the day
Cometh night;	And the night
And a star	Leave me so?
Speedeth all	Fare thee well;
Leadeth all,	Day is gone,
To their rest.	Night is on.

Today taps for mother were sounded. There was no bugle, only a deep rumbling of emotions down in my soul. Mother was stricken on April 5, and never left her bed, but there were many days thru the summer when she was quite strong, and always bright. I went back to Ware on August 20, expecting that the slow decline of strength



would keep her some time. Sept. 5, I was delivering an address to a Pomona Grange meeting in Belchertown when the telegram from my sister came, "Mother much worse". I knew what it meant and hastened back to Ware and then on to Kensington, reaching there at 9.30 P. M. Mother knew me, picked up at sight of me and was quite bright, and during the next day continued fairly bright till 6, when she no longer knew us, and at 5 next morning turned her face to the wall. She never spoke again and soon went into a coma, which lasted 36 hours, when the end came.

The funeral was Sunday afternoon, September 10, in the Universalist Church where so many times she had gone with two generations, her father, and then with myself and sister. Rev. Asa Bradley, a stalwart old Universalist pastor attended the services, and did so with fine ability and helpfulness.

Mother had been afraid of being buried alive, so we placed her in the tomb till Sept. 16. On that day, Gramp took the blue cart and Ag, the blue cart in which he had driven back and forth from house to field for so many years, while Gram watched him, and with her grandsons Roland and Robert, and her nephew John Blake to aid him, we drove to the tomb, there we loaded the body in, Gramp climbed upon the box while the rest of us walked, and we drove to the grave.

Gramp said, "I don't know whether the rest of you wish to see mother again, but I do". So the lid was removed, we took our last look, closed the casket, lowered it and filled the grave. There were no tears, but a dull, hard sorrow in the heart. Such an experience hardens one's soul beyond tears.

Dear old Gram. How unselfish she was. How she loved us all. How sweet have been the 15 years of sum-





mer camp life because she was at the end of the lane, ever so glad to greet myself and her grandchildren. Now life could never be the same again even tho time heal some of the wound.

We remained at Kensington till Sept. 24 to sort of cheer one another over the sorrow by being together, then I turned my face toward Ware. What a sad start it was. Kensington would never be the same again. Life would never be the same again. Day is done and night comes on. Life started on the down grade. May I think as Cowper felt and spoke of his mother when she passed:—

“Thou as a gallant bark, from Albion's coast,  
The storms all weathered and ocean crossed,  
Shoots into port at some well-favored isle  
Where spices breath and brighter seasons smile —

Thou with sails all set hath reached the shore  
Where tempests never beat nor billows roar.”

#### MOTHER'S PLOT OF GROUND

I place my flowers, one by one,  
Upon this grassy mound.  
I know dear Comrade, you're not there,  
But 'tis your plot of ground.

I'd like to make it beautiful  
With every flower you love;  
I hope you are not blind to see  
Its beauty from above.

As the oriental devotee  
Had a prayer-rug set apart,  
So this mound of living grass  
Brings worship from my heart.

The candles are God's own planting  
Upon this holy shrine:  
The dewy tipped grassy blades  
In the morning sun shall shine.



## MY MOTHER'S FAITH

"The body is but the garment of the spirit; it dies, changes, disintegrates; the spirit remains. The matter which constitutes the body is mere appearance like all matter — the Universe is dynamism. An Intelligent Force rules all. The soul can not be destroyed." FLAMARION

My mother's Uncle Newell, a universalist at Kensington, became a liberal unitarian in Bangor and much interested in spiritualism. He sent my mother much reading matter and she became a convert. During her later years the English spiritualistic movement following the World War, especially the writing of Sir Oliver Lodge, was of great comfort to her. Also she relied much on the writings of Myers, Hyslop and Flamarion. And the work of these men cannot be scoffed at. In the quotation above Flamarion places his faith on exactly the same basis as Prof. Bowne of B. U., my teacher in philosophy, placed his faith in theism. And he is as much entitled to respect for his opinion as Bowne.

In the early years following mother's death I visited three mediums for sittings. One, the later well known Margery of Boston; Mrs. Soule, another woman, less well known; and Mr. Foss of Concord, Mass.

From Margery I received nothing save an impression that she was not at all sincere. From the other woman, I got a rather interesting communication from my father's people, but nothing from Mother.

The entire attitude of Mr. Foss and his family was sincere and religious. And the manifestations were thrilling and admitted, so far as I could see, of no explanation save genuineness. I made a report of the sitting, from which I copy:—





## DID MOTHER APPEAR THRU MR. FOSS?

After I had spent an hour chatting with the Foss family, looked over his collection of arrow-heads and Indian relics, and we had discussed various matters, especially death and spiritualism, we went into their kitchen. Lights were switched off, tho a kitchen stove threw out some light and lights from the streets came thru the curtain openings. After Mr. Foss sang an hymn as we were sitting at the table with hands joined, little lights appeared and floated thru space, dropping on our heads and then away. They were in the shape of a "V" or an "L" and about an inch long. With the lights came raps upon the table before the various sitters, brushes of a hand on our head, raps upon our arms. The sitting was two hours long and during the entire time the same manifestations kept up. There was a piece of chalk on the table and occasionally it wrote before one of us. The light would then be switched on and the message read. It usually was the name of some person, and a few brief words.

After several raps before me I asked, "Is there some one here to see me?" the answer was 3 raps, meaning "yes". "Is it a relative?" Again "yes". "Is it my mother?" "Yes." I asked, "Is that you Gram?" Many rapid and vigorous raps. "Is anyone with you?" The chalk wrote before me — we turned up lights and I read the name "George". Lights turned down, I asked "Is it George your brother or George the painter?" raps at the last name and the sound of a brush over the table. I asked "Are you painting over there George?" Vigorous raps. "How does it go over there George?" Vigorous raps and the table lifted on my side fully a foot. Later again there were vigorous raps at my place in the table, and Mr. Foss asked, "Is that Mr. Sawyer's mother



again?" Many raps and a hand brushed over my hair and arms with raps on my shoulder.

About the experiences I do want to say, that while the message was not at all of convincing character, yet I could see the lights back of me and beside me, and no one passed them to touch me. No one moved, and the lights flashed near the ceiling, floating immediately to another side of the room — how they could have been made I can not fathom. The room was simple, only the chairs and table and kitchen stove and a sink on the further side. I have understood that Prof. James and Hodgdon were unable to explain the phenomena. And the brushes on my arms and hair were most unusual, they felt as tho they were brushing my bare skin rather than my clothing. It was all in all a great experience.

## THE COMFORT OF A CLAIRVOYANT EXPERIENCE

### DID THE SOUL COME BACK TO ME?

"She spake: I longed to take her in my arms  
The soul of my dead mother. Thrice I tried,  
Moved by strong desire, and thrice the form  
Passed thru them like a shadow of a dream.

. . . . .  
And then my reverend mother said,  
Tis the lot of all our race. . .  
When they are dead, no more the sinews bind  
Bones to flesh, when once from these white bones  
The life departs, then like a dream, the soul  
Flys off and flits from place to place."

Achilles to his dead mother in THE ODYSSEY

Almost exactly 24 hours from the time mother's soul passed, I was in Tolstoy House at my camp, talking with Mrs. Sawyer and my daughter Rachel, both of whom had so tenderly and loyally stood with me in my care for her.





I was much depressed, and particularly because a long-talked of plan for a family photo had not been carried out. In my depression I stepped outside the cabin to be alone. As I stepped into the woods, of a sudden a little tuft of leaves in a little tree twirled in a very strange and noisy way, and I seemed to feel Gram's presence rather than see her, and from the leaves seemed to come a voice which said, "Don't worry about any picture of my poor old worn-out self, can't you see I am back again".

What was the experience? Was it psychological, some slant from over wrought nerves? Was it Gram actually back again? Was it perhaps pantheistic communion with Nature? The great thing about the experience was its help to me. I looked at my watch and Gram had been dead exactly 24 hours, and from that time on the great sorrow of my heart had been eased.

I do not state any opinion upon these or other psychic manifestations, but from my studies in recent years showing that the best and earliest information about the resurrection of Jesus seem to be of sudden, psychic appearances, I am wondering if there may not be validity in these experiences. At any rate from that minute the bitterness of my grief was gone and I found great comfort in the experience.

#### AS MOTHER LIVES IN MY MEMORY

"And so I oft shall think of her  
When I am troubled sore,  
Thank God I had her in my life  
Tho she walks with me no more."

#### MY READING MOTHER

"You may have tangible wealth untold,  
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold —  
But rich as I, you never can be,  
For I had a mother who read to me."



My earliest recollections of mother were those times in early childhood, when I stood by her side and she read to me from my Punch and Judy book, Parley's Tales and my primer. So many times did mother read Punch and Judy to me that before I was five years of age I could repeat the whole book.

Schopenhaur says we inherit our intellectual qualities from our mothers. What I inherited from mother was re-enforced by her splendid example, and her years of preaching the value of knowledge and education, wherein she taught me the wisdom voiced by Franklin, "empty your purse into your head."

From her influence came my seeking a life of intellectual pursuits which has been so satisfying, and I placed on mother's tombstone as an epitaph, the saying of the great Greek, slightly changed, for it shows her fondest thought:—

"I have had the joy of a wise mother,  
I have lived to see my children educated."

### MY MOTHER, A SAINT MONICA

Augustine, father of the eastern and western branches of the church, owed everything to his mother. Her sweet influence and prayers turned him from a life of thoughtlessness to religion and intellectual re-birth. And when she died he ceased to be great unselfish spirit and became the merely ambitious churchman.

My mother was my St. Monica, and I trust her influence so extended beyond the grave that I have not turned selfish and ambitious.

### MOTHER'S LOVE

"Her love was like an island  
In life's ocean, vast and wide —  
A shelter, safe and peaceful,  
From storm and roaring tide —  
Ah God, I'd give so much to stand  
A laddie by her side."





## MOTHER'S FACE

"Mother: like Heaven's great face is thy sweet face  
Stupendous with mystery for me.  
Eyes older than the light, cheeks that no flower  
Remembers; brow at which infant care  
Gazed weeping up and saw the skies enshower  
With tender rain of mysterious hair."

## MOTHER'S GARDEN

Mother kept the little front yard of the home as her flower garden, and in it were near fifty different plants given her by friends and neighbors, and as one by one they died, she tended the flowers with greater care, and many a night, toward twilight, she walked among them.

My mother's old garden was a place of delight,  
No flowers e'er sweeter, no blossoms more bright,  
And the cool summer wind that up the lane flows  
Is laden with perfume of its lily and rose.

There at the end of the lane it stood,  
Guarding with seclusion the little home of my boyhood.  
As a child I dug my arms thru its fence,  
Clutching the ribbon grass and morning glory —  
As a boy I sat and watched mother dig the dirt  
Proud as a queen among her living subjects —  
As a man I looked over upon the old-fashioned family  
That grew in masses and jumbles and gay wildness  
And not as a carefully trained bed.

\* \* \*

Sweet and many the memories that old-fashioned garden  
Wafts down to the man of sixty.

"Her heart was like her garden,  
Old-fashioned, quaint and sweet,  
With here a wealth of blossoms  
And there a still retreat.

And in that quiet garden  
The garden of her heart —  
Song birds were always singing  
Their songs of cheer apart.



## MY MOTHER

And from it floats forever  
 O'er coming sin and strife,  
 Sweet as the breath of roses,  
 The fragrance of her life."

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## MOTHER'S HANDS

"Such beautiful, beautiful hands  
 Tho the heart were weary and sad,  
 Those patient hands kept toiling on  
 That her children might be glad."

. . .

"Hands that were old and wrinkled  
 Hands that were worn and tired,  
 Hands that cheerfully struggled,  
 Hands by LOVE inspired."

. . .

"Fold reverently the weary hands  
 That toiled so long and well:  
 And tho my tears of sorrow fall  
 Let sweet thanksgiving swell."

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## THE RING MY MOTHER WORE

"Tho earth has many treasures rare  
 In gems and golden store,  
 My heart has one most precious far,  
 The ring my mother wore.

I saw it first when as a child  
 I played close by her side —  
 She said it was my father's gift  
 When she became his bride."

THE  
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

WATER RESOURCES DIVISION  
 RIVER MANAGEMENT SECTION  
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REPORT NO. 1  
 PREPARED FOR THE  
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY  
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ELIZABETH

Mother's Only Daughter — My Only Sister  
At her graduation, Robinson Female Seminary,  
Exeter, N. H., 1901.

Yet with her went a secret sense  
Of all things sweet and fair,  
And Beauty's gracious providence  
Refreshed her unaware,

*Whittier.*





MARY ELIZABETH MOULTON (SAWYER)

KINGSBURY

April 10, 1882 — April 20, 1931

My sister was given her grandmother's name by my mother, as grandmother died the same week she was born. She graduated from Robinson Seminary in Exeter in the class of 1901. During her course at the seminary she took several prizes for efficiency in debate and public speaking. She then taught school in South Hampton for a time, and for several years at the East School in Kensington. Nov. 2, 1913, she was married by me at Ware to Edward S. Kingsbury of Amesbury, and went at once to live in the pleasant Kingsbury Home on the Point Shore Road in that town. She was several terms president of the Elizabeth H. Whittier Club, and served till her death as substitute teacher in the higher grades and Junior High.

"A life of beauty lends to all it sees

The beauty of its thought:"

Our sense of beauty has led us to a great interest and satisfaction in architecture, decoration, painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and a vast amount of human effort and human genius has been put forth along these lines. To have the sense of beauty is to put one's self into a stream of great dignity. My sister had the sense of beauty and was able to do this. The beauty found in Nature, in literature, art, music, and a well kept home, she knew and enjoyed. She found amid the jostle and noise of our common life, that man does not live by bread alone, but that poems, sunsets, trees, flowers, songs, dignified buildings, and clean sweet things make up the richer life.



## MY SISTER ELIZABETH

Just nine years from the time that my sister and I stood with my father and my wife over the death-bed of my mother, my sister was taken down with bowel trouble which turned out to be cancer. An emergency operation at the Anna Jaques Hospital relieved her and she might have lived for a time in some comfort, but the doctors, Warren of Amesbury and Mixter of Boston, at once set their minds on a more thoro operation which might, if successful, let her live several years. I was skeptical but they assured me that at the emergency operation they had opportunity for a complete examination and that the operation could be successfully performed. So my poor sister went thru five weeks of nervous torture, facing such an operation without ether, and I had the bitter experience of having the doctors explain to me, while the hospital rang with her screams, that the cancer had gone further than they expected and hence all the five weeks waiting in terror and the dreadful experience of the etherless operation were for nothing.

She came back to her home after a few weeks more and lived fairly comfortably, slipping back faster in winter and dying in the spring.

J. William Lloyd in his book "ENERES", well argues that the four supreme values which man has found, are God, Love, Nature, Beauty. My sister believed in God, knew the value of Love, had a deep joy in Nature, but above all enjoyed Beauty. Her sense of Beauty was not alone something I observed, but Rev. John Moore, who knew her and attended her funeral, remarked upon it.







STEPHEN C. SAWYER

(Kensington Sexton for 45 years)

Mr. Sawyer is holding "The Old English Judge", a slate stone in the old cemetery, broken by frost in a manner which left one part resembling an old English judge with his wig, etc.



## "STEVE" — MY FATHER

(March 7, 1846 — Dec. 28, 1934)

There's the well that he dug, with its water so cold,  
And the wet dripping pump, so rusty and old,  
No more is the water by the patriarch drawn,  
For the pitcher is broken, the old man is gone —

Yon tree with its fragrance is filling the air,  
So rich with its blossoms, so thrifty and fair,  
By his hand it was planted and well did he say,  
It would live when its planter had moulded away —

On the green, grassy knoll, above the sweet brook,  
Where so long and so often he watered his flock,  
My father is sleeping his last and long sleep,  
While the wind in the trees their lull-a-by keep —

He has ploughed his last furrow, has reaped his last grain,  
No morn shall awake him to labor again.

Steve was born in Plaistow, March 7, 1846, his parents being Calvin and Azubah (Currier) Sawyer. His little sister Annie and his younger brother Walter both died in childhood. His mother died when he was six years of age and he spent much time for several months with his grandparents in the old-fashioned home in Hill, N. H. When he was 8 years of age his father married again, Mehitabel Eaton of Plaistow and came to South Road, Kensington, to live, and there Steve saw a little sister Ida, and a little brother Wesley Lincoln, come into the world. His father died in 1868, his brother in 1927, his sister Ida (Mrs. Frank A. Mace) survived him only seven weeks.

Steve and mother were married Feb. 27, 1873. I was born in Abigail Chase's house, where they lived for some time. Later they lived on Gove's Hill in the Hilliard House, and in the spring of 1875 moved into the northern side of Col. Blake's tenement in the "city". Here my brother Wesley Stephen was born Jan. 6, 1880, and my





sister Elizabeth was born April 10, 1882, and here in the same corner of the front down stairs room both mother and father breathed their last.

In this little house my father lived three distinct stages of life. 1875 to 1913, when he was rearing the children. 1913 to 1921, the quiet years when he and mother lived together after the last of the children had moved away. 1921 to 1935, the years after mother passed when he lived alone, the oldest man in town, and with his cane and yarns became the familiar figure and known as "Gramp" or the "Old Captain". His health was excellent till 8 months before death when he entered upon the seige of final struggle with a cancer.

Gramp was a man of remarkable ingenuity with his hands, and delighted both his children and grandchildren with his ability to make and repair things. This led him to a keen interest in the use of tools and mechanical invention and to his dying day he showed an active and intelligent interest in such, and many a time has explained to me just what it was for and how it was used, when I picked up in some place some labor-saving device 100 years old.

In Gramp's early days most every farmer had some trade, at which he worked winters, shoe-making, coopering, etc., and Gramp had seen these tools in use by the old-time farmer-craftsmen. His father was a shoe-maker, his grandfather Currier a cooper, etc., etc.

My father showed remarkable courage and patience in his long wrestle with his final sickness, and when he died only two months separated him from his 89th birthday. Bryant's words in "The Old Man's Funeral" fit the situation which arises from his death: —





And I am glad he lived so long,  
And glad that he has gone to his reward;  
Nor deem that kindly Nature did him wrong,  
Softly to disengage the vital cord.  
For when trembling limbs refuse their weight  
And films, slow gathering, dim the sight,  
'Tis man's precious boon to die.

### "THE OLD SEXTON"

"Nigh to a grave that was newly made,  
Leaned the sexton old on his earth-worn spade,  
His work was done, and he paused to wait  
For the funeral train at the open gate —  
A relic of bygone days was he,  
His hair was white like the foamy sea,  
And these words they came from his lips so thin,  
'I gather them in, I gather them in.  
I gather them in for their final rest  
And lay them down in the earth's dark breast.'

. . . . .  
And now comes again a funeral train  
Winding silently o'er the solemn plain,  
But the tale is ended the old man told,  
For Death has taken the sexton old."

The old New England towns have changed rapidly during the past 45 years, the period my father was laying away residents and former residents of Kensington. In so many instances he has laid to their rest the last members of families who had tilled the farms owned by several generations before them, so that his long term as sexton seems the end of an era, in which he closed the books and covered the graves of the last generation of families that had lived in our town and locality for over 250 years.





AUNT MARY ESTHER

Mary Esther (Blake) Warner  
Nov. 3, 1840 — June 12, 1912



AUNT SARAH

Sarah Frances (Blake) Colby  
July 31, 1843 — Sept. 14, 1931







## Mother's Brothers and Sisters

Mother was the youngest of nine children. Of these two died in childhood, another many years before I was born, the others were three uncles and two aunts who entered into the circle of my life.

### JOHN PHILEMON BLAKE

Born Dec. 18, 1829. Died June 28, 1861. Married August 12, 1851, Mary E. Moulton, daughter of Benjamin of Brentwood. He was thrown from his wagon at East Kingston depot where his horse became afrighted when he was loading apples upon the train. His daughter Ida never married, the other daughter, Lucy Perley, married Elmer Kimball of Newton, but died without issue.

### GEORGE BLAKE

Born Nov., 1831, died from apoplexy May 2, 1892. He never married. He kept the old Blake store before going to war in 1861, where he served three years, and was in the thick of the fight at Wilderness and had his canteen shot away. Upon his return he again kept store and worked shoe-making till his death.

### AUGUSTA PAMELIA

Born Jan. 7, 1834: died Jan. 23, 1834.

### THOMAS HILLIARD BLAKE

Born May 22, 1835; died in Haverhill, 1906. Md. Apr. 17, 1858 to Cynthia Batchelder, daughter of William S. and Mary Ann Batchelder of East Kingston. He learned the painter's trade in Lowell, Mass., and worked there several years. Later as painter and shoe-maker in Kensington. Nine children, Mary Augusta dying early from a fall down the cellar stairs. Ada, Arthur, John, Perley, Willard Emery, Josephine, Bessie, Ethel lived to maturity.



## HENRY CLAY

Born Dec. 30, 1837; died Nov. 4, 1842. A lovable boy, he ever remained the delight of his father and mother.

## MARY ESTHER (BLAKE) WARNER

Dec. 1, 1872, Mary Esther was married to William Warner of Newburyport, who drove the old-time stage from Newburyport to Exeter and stopped daily at the Blake store. He died Sept. 5, 1881, and Mary Esther, with her little girl, Esther Blake Warner, returned to the old home to keep house for her two brothers living there. Mary Esther as a girl had tended the store run by George Walton in the Hilliard house, and so when George died, she found great delight in taking over the store. George had been in line to be appointed post master, and so the appointment came to her. One progressive step she at once took was open sale of daily papers in town, the Boston Globe, Boston Journal, Boston Herald.

I was greatly in debt to her for allowing me to read as much as I liked from her papers, and when I went away to study she provided me with a bible and for several years sent the papers to me.

The old Blake shop burned in February, 1894, and Mary Esther put up the new building, since her death carried on by her daughter, Esther Blake Warner. Thus the old store has been run by the Blake family at least 110 years.

## SARAH FRANCES (BLAKE) COLBY

Aunt Sarah did not leave the old home till her marriage to Willard C. Colby in April, 1883. Thru the years she had daily milked the cows, cared for the hens, and many a day took care of me while father and mother went to Exeter or Amesbury.





I was five years of age when Colby appeared, a large, jolly man, who smoked fine-cut tobacco, and appeared to me as a millionaire. Colby was a printer by trade and worked in Cambridgeport. He later travelled over the state soliciting subscriptions, etc. May, 1887 he bought the COOS COUNTY DEMOCRAT which he weekly sent to me, and I had a big boyish ambition to own a weekly paper, something which has never quite left me.

April, 1890, Colby sold the paper and he and Aunt Sarah bought a store in Grantham which they carried on till 1894, when they sold it and moved to Loudon. Here they lived till Colby died, Nov. 10, 1902, and Sarah after coming back and lived a time in the old home, moved to Exeter where she lived till her death, and where she and Colby are buried.

I have many pleasant memories of Aunt Sarah, but none so vivid as when she rescued me at the age of four, from the assault of the old gobbler who ever strutted so proudly around my grandmother's yard.

### HENRY TUCK BLAKE

Born July 9, 1845; died the age of 74. Went south as a workman during the war and later enlisted. Following the war returned to Kensington where he lived many years. living with George, aiding in the store and post office and working on shoes. Known as the "doctor" and was quite a character in his way.

### **The Great Generation of Kensington Blakes**

Mother's grandfather, Deacon John Prescott Blake, married his cousin Sarah Blake, and they reared in the generation of mother's father, an exceptionally fine group





of children. Samuel Prescott, born 1801, lived only a month, and Josiah, born 1813, lived 15 months, but Ira, John T. and Newell became men of great force and ability, while Philemon who died at the age of 26 was a young man of ability; and Aunt Lucy and Aunt Betsy were women of fine ability.

#### PHILEMON BLAKE, 1802 — 1828

I find him in Boston in 1822 and boarding with a Mrs. Betsy Nichols of North Reading, who kept a boarding house in Boston. In 1825 he married her daughter Sarah, and returning to Kensington borrowed \$500 of Oliver Locke and bought the Stewart property in the center of the town where he opened a store. In 1828 inflammation of the bowels took the young man away suddenly. Later his widow married Samuel Hobbes.

#### SQUIRE IRA BLAKE, 1799 — 1882

Adopted at the age of 13 by his uncle, Ensign John Blake, Ira, without institutional training, studied and acquired a knowledge of higher mathematics and became an expert surveyor, and read enough law to practice in the county court, and was many years justice-of-the-peace. He wrote the wills of his townsmen, settled their estates, surveyed their lands, and was often called to court to give expert advice on matters of surveyings. His grandson, Ralph Adams Cram of Boston, has given us a fine picture of life in Squire Ira's homestead, in his book, "Walled Towns", pp. 53-58.

#### HON. NEWELL BLAKE OF BANGOR, 1810 — 1891

Before he was 20 years of age I find Newell, first in Boston and later in Lowell. In the latter place he learned the trade of clock-maker and worked in the old Billerica



factory. In March, 1832 he went to New York City to work at his trade with Porter and Frye. In 1836 he had serious sickness, nearly died, and his brother John T. went to New York and brought him back to Kensington and gave to him his store, while he, John, devoted his entire time to his boot-making factory.

Newell lived on the stumpfield homestead and cared for his parents and grand-parents, two pairs of fine old people. Aunt Lucy, working in Boston, brought for a visit, her friend Phœbe Jordan of Maine. Romance followed, and in November 1840, Newell and Phœbe Jordan married.

In 1842 when the last of the old people were dead he sold out his store and moved to Oldtown, Maine, and opened a store. 23 years later he moved into Bangor, became a lumber dealer, owned several vessels, etc.

At Kensington Newell was an active man in public affairs, captain in the training company, etc. While living in Bangor he served in the state senate and also in the city government and was mayor of the city. He was a leading business man of his day and was a personal friend of Hannibal Hamlin, vice-president with Lincoln. He left a large property which was wisely and kindly distributed among 22 relatives and the public.

#### AUNT LUCY AND AUNT BETSY

*Aunt Lucy*, born 1804, remained a maiden lady to her death. She rode into Boston on the old Turnpike stage from Newburyport and secured a position and learned the seamstress trade, at which she worked till she had accumulated enough to enable her to retire to Kensington.

*Aunt Betsy*, born 1808, married Jeremiah Wadleigh in 1843. Of their two sons, Ellery died in Kensington without issue. George went in the Civil War and following that moved west and lived in Kansas and Missouri, and left several children.





## COL. JOHN T. BLAKE, 1806 — 1883

At the age of 16 he went to Boston and apprenticed to learn the trade of boot-maker. When his brother Philemon died in 1828, he returned to Kensington and took over the store and started making "coarse and fine boots". Feb. 1, 1829, he married Mary Elizabeth Moulton of Exeter, and tradition survived to my day as to what a fine-looking couple they were. John T. soon had several men and women working for him, and diaries of old skippers speak of the quality of the boots of Blake of Kensington.

Active in public affairs, John T. went thru the various offices of the old training regiment, of which he was finally colonel for several years till he resigned. He was also representative three terms, town clerk six years, selectman, and justice of peace for 33 years. He attended and took part in 56 successive town meetings. He was actively interested in national politics and a great admirer of Henry Clay. His favorite amusement was the old time dance, and tradition long survived of his grace in some of these dances, especially his favorite, "The College Hornpipe".

Col. Blake and his brother Squire Ira were actively interested in forming the local Universalist Church. Col. Blake leaving the orthodox church because a too zealous preacher said "we have no assurance that infant children of unregenerate parents go to heaven". This was too much for Col. Blake who had buried his little Parmelia and Henry Clay.



## GRANDMOTHER BLAKE

Of all the beings who this planet have trod,  
The nearest I've seen to the angels of God,  
Are the grandmammias, who with a smile and a nod,  
Welcome their kin to Grandmother's house.

The above verse is a sentiment voiced in a little poem for my own children, who found such joy in running down to "Gram's" from my camp. But the sentiment roots back into my own memory of the dear, sweet old lady who was my own grandmother.

My Sawyer grandparents died long before I was born, but grandsir Blake lived till I was near ten, and I recall him as the old man at the shoe bench, whose thick head of white hair was a wonder to me, and as the dignified old man with tall hat and cane, and again as the first person whom I saw dead, as I went with my father to his funeral.

Grandmother Blake died when I was eight, and how many times I had trudged over the 150 yards to "the other house", to be greeted so lovingly by her, and given a penny to get a stick of candy at the store. She had been a beautiful younger woman, daughter of Deacon Thomas Moulton of Exeter and Esther Melcher of Kensington, and that beauty made her a winning personality in her old age.

The picture of the dear old lady, with her knitting work and glasses on her forehead, and cheery smile and word, is a memory that goes with me to heaven, where I hope to meet her.





## Genealogy

(Mother's Branch)

### THE BLAKE FAMILY IN ENGLAND, HAMPTON AND KENSINGTON

"Knowledge of kindred and the genealogies of the ancient families deserveth the highest praise. . . It is a spur to virtue to look back on our lines." — BACON.

"It is well to oft recur to the history of our ancestry."

DANIEL WEBSTER

#### THE FAMILY IN ENGLAND

The original name "Aplake", "on the lake", passed thru various forms of spelling to become Blake. Jasper, pioneer to Hampton, came from the Blakes of Wimbotsham, whose arms were as follows:—

"Ermine, a pile embattled, counter embattled, sable, between two lion's gambes erect and erased, gules, over all a bend vert."

The generations of the family traced are:—

PETER BLAKE, first of Southency, later of Wimbotsham, owner of Manor Tonwalls in London, 1466.

PETER BLAKE, gent.

JASPER BLAKE, gent. devisee of above Manor of Tonwalls.

PETER BLAKE of Wimbotsham, wills property to son Jasper.

JASPER BLAKE, Wimbotsham, married 1570.

JASPER BLAKE, born 1592, church warden, registered at Herald's College, fortunes lost after 1623, father of Jasper who came to America prior to 1643.

#### THE FAMILY IN AMERICA

Jasper Blake, mariner, is found at Hampton in 1643, and married Deborah, sister or daughter of Rev. Timothy Dalton.





My line of descent to present is as follows:—

TIMOTHY Blake, born 1649, married Naomi Sleeper, 8 children.

MOSES Blake, born 1682, married Abigail Smith, 8 children. Lived in Kensington, one of first tything men.

HEZEKIAH Blake, born 1703, married Johannah Fellows. Died 1746, stone is about 3 rods from Universalist Church.

JOSIAH Blake, born 1725, married Elizabeth Brown, 9 children, held many town offices and served in Revolution.

HEZEKIAH Blake, born 1753, married Lucy Prescott, 8 children, buried in new cemetery beneath monument. Served in Revolution.

Deacon JOHN PRESCOTT Blake, born 1775, married his cousin Sarah Blake, 8 children.

Col. JOHN T. Blake, 1806-1883, 9 children.

*see p 32 for  
his wife.*

PHOEBE MARIA Blake, 1847-1921, md. Stephen C. Sawyer, 3 children.

ROLAND DOUGLAS SAWYER, born 1874. Married 1898 to Mary Locke Palmer of Kensington.

#### SIX CHILDREN

Ruth Elizabeth, born June 22, 1899, md. Seymour S. Getter, children, Elizabeth Sawyer and Azubah Ramona.

Rachel Nathalie, born May 12, 1901, md. Harold Y. Smith, children, Barbara Helen, Nathalie Sawyer, Phoebe Lysia.

Roland D. Jr., born Dec. 26, 1902, grad. Mass. State College, unmarried, master at St. Marks School, Southborough, Mass.

Robert Palmer, born Aug. 24, 1904, md. Ruby Laveullette, children, Robert S., Arlene G., Clement Calvin.

Roslind Blake, born June 17, 1906, grad. Worcester Normal, unmarried, school teacher in New Jersey.

Ramona Jeanette, born Sept. 16, 1911, married Rev. Joseph Barth. Graduate of Tufts College and Meadville Seminary and equipped for the liberal ministry.



## WAR RECORD OF THE BLAKE FAMILY

### COLONIAL WARS

Jasper's Sons — All five took part in the Indian Wars:

Israel in King Philip's War, 1675-1676.

Timothy in King William's War, 1696-1698, and Capt. Chesley Co., 1708.

Philemon in King William's War, 1690, at age of 19, and in Queen Anne's War, 1707.

John in Queen Anne's War, 1707.

Samuel, in Queen Anne's War, shot and killed by Indians fourth Sabbath of June, 1706 (diary Deacon Saml's Dow).

Jasper's Grandsons — Three served in Colonial Wars:

Samuel in Queen Anne's War, 1708.

Moses, member of fifth Co. Cavalry, French and Indian War, 1756.

John, died in Albany when marching to re-inforce Gen. Johnson in Col. Gilman's Exeter and Hampton Regmt.

### THE REVOLUTION

Josiah Blake and his son Hezekiah in Capt. Winthrop Rowe's Co. Josiah also Sgt. in Capt. Nathan Brown's Co., Col. Long's regmt. 1777, and Capt. Parson's Co. (Col. Senter regmt.).

Hezekiah was with Stark, Morgan and Arnold, 109 days, when Burgoyne was forced to surrender in 1777.

### TRAINING COMPANIES

Newell Blake, Capt. in Kensington Co.

John T. Blake, Col. of third Regmt.

### CIVIL WAR

George Blake, three years, 14 N. H. Volunteers.

Henry T. Blake, 100 days at Fort Warren.

### INDIAN TRADITION

Timothy, oldest son of Jasper, married Naomi, dau. of Thomas Sleeper, and lived in section of Hampton called Sleepertown. Indians tried to burn his barn by setting fire to bark but were driven away.

















